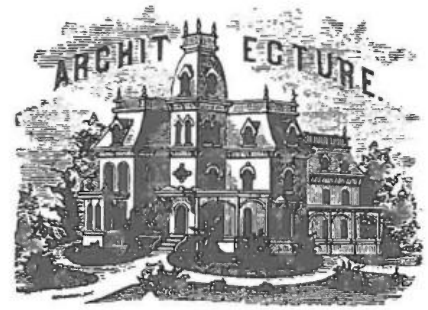


# A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



**Charles Sumner Frost**  
1856-1931

Although Charles Sumner Frost became an architect of national prominence in the midwest, known especially for his work on railroad stations, he designed a number of buildings in his native Maine.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Lewiston in 1856, the son of a lumber merchant and mill owner, Charles S. Frost was no stranger to the state's building materials. He attended Lewiston's public schools and was introduced to architecture by working for a local architect for three years.<sup>2</sup>

After taking a special architecture course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1876, Frost was employed by the prestigious

Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns. In 1881 Frost moved to Chicago and one year later formed a partnership with Henry Ives Cobb, whom he had met when they both worked for Peabody and Stearns. The partnership lasted until 1889 when Cobb left for New York.<sup>3</sup>

The first known Frost design in Maine was a residence for J.F. Turner on Falmouth Street in Deering, now part of Portland (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> Built in 1883, this elaborate Queen Anne house remains remarkably intact, except for the carriage house which was demolished.<sup>5</sup> With such decorative details as a first floor bulls-eye porch screen, a second story clad in scalloped shingles, and playful half timbering in the gable peak, the house maintains its prominent identity on Falmouth Street.

The next building Frost planned in Maine was a Lewiston residence for his father A.E. Frost in 1886 (Figure 2). This Cobb and Frost design in the Queen Anne style featured a first story of clapboards, textured with a string course of decorative shingles, above which was a second story of traditional shingles.<sup>6</sup> The principal facade of the house was composed of an engaged tower and a long, sloping roof which terminated over the entrance. Adjacent to the entrance was a bay window that followed the roofline of the cross gable, which comprised the remainder of the facade. Detailed with playful brickwork, the tall chimney was centrally placed in a dramatic relationship to the downward sloping roof. The building was constructed under the supervision of the local architect George M. Coombs.<sup>7</sup>

While working in Chicago with Henry Ives Cobb, Frost competed for the design of the Maine State Building, which was to be erected at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1892 (Figure 3). On December 16, 1891, the Maine World's Fair Commission decided on Frost's plans for a distinctive Queen Anne style structure.<sup>8</sup> Because Maine was given an irregular plot in the northeast section of Jackson Park, the Maine State Building was designed in an octagonal shape. Construction was completed by contractors Grace and Hyde of Chicago under



Figure 1. J. F. Turner House, Portland, 1990 view (MHPC).



Figure 2. A. E. Frost House, Lewiston, 1893 view (MHPC).

Frost's supervision at a cost of \$20,000.<sup>9</sup> Equally distinctive was the material used to create the building: native granite, wood, and slate supplied by several Maine companies.<sup>10</sup>

Three stories in height, the Maine State Building rose on the first story in courses of varying shades of granite, darker at the bottom and gradually becoming lighter. To demonstrate the various ways granite could be dressed, "rock, face, tooled, and plain surfaces were used."<sup>11</sup>

The main entrance had three pointed arches with two semi-detached and two free-standing columns, behind which was an open loggia. On either side of the other entrance ways, which had semi-detached columns and two rectangular windows, were walls with four large matching windows with smaller windows above them.

The second story was constructed of wood and had four projecting balconies with carved panels. Each of the four corners had a turret with two windows on the second story and three each on the third story. The third story was comprised of a large slate covered octagonal roof and the projecting turrets with cone-shaped roofs. The peak of the roof featured a small open tower supported by brackets.

The interior of the pavillion contained an octagonal rotunda with entrance ways at the front, sides, and rear. It was ornamented with Colonial Revival woodwork, and the third story space had an elaborate glass ceiling and functioned as an art gallery at the Exposition.

When the Fair ended, the building was sold to Hiram Ricker and Sons, who owned the Poland Spring summer resort.<sup>12</sup> The Rickers hired a sixteen car train to bring the dismantled structure back to Maine, where it was rebuilt adjacent to their hotel in 1895. Originally the library and art gallery for the resort, the Maine State Building is now a museum.

In 1898 Charles S. Frost formed a partnership with Alfred H. Granger, with whom he worked until 1910, primarily on the design of railroad stations in the mid-west. The relationship was more than professional, for the partners were married to sisters Mary and Belle Hughitt. And it was no coincidence that Frost and Granger received so many railway station commissions. Their father-in-law, Marvin Hughitt, was President of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway.

During this time, Frost and Granger designed a summer house in Camden for Chauncy Keep of Chicago, at one time the Director of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway (Figure 4). Built in the half timbered style in 1900-01, the house was sited to overlook Penobscot Bay. As was typical of these grand summer homes, the Keep Cottage was surrounded by a large shingled and clapboarded piazza on the south and east sides. The first story was clapboarded, had a well protected loggia, another more open loggia, and several multiple groupings of windows. The second story, finished in gray stucco, included a loggia off the master bedroom which had multiple arches. Only the half timbered end gables



Figure 3. Maine State Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1892 view (MHPC).





## COUNTRY HOUSE OF MR. CHAUNCY KEEP, CAMDEN,

FROST & GRANGER, ARCHITECTS, CHICAGO

Figure 4. Chauncy Keep Cottage, Camden, *The Architectural Review*, January, 1904, (Courtesy of the Trustees of Boston Public Library).

on the third story broke the plain plaster finish of the second and third stories. Because the wood finish of the first story was carried to the ground, the only masonry visible was on the two chimneys, built of small stones from the surrounding ledges.<sup>13</sup> Typical of the period, the interior woodwork was largely Colonial Revival, using French doors, fanlights, fluted pilasters, and arches.

The remainder of the buildings Frost designed in Maine were in Northeast Harbor, where he summered during the last decade of his life.<sup>14</sup> He planned his first cottage, "Up-a-Way", there for himself in 1921. This two story hipped roof shingle summer house is tucked in the woods above the harbor. The house features a recessed front entrance with built-in seats on either side of the door, an overhang reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement, a bay window adjacent to the entrance, and a covered loggia projecting from the ocean side.

Frost next designed "Crestwood" in 1923 (Figure 5). It was built on Schoolhouse Ledge the following year for Richard C. Cabot, a Cambridge, Massachusetts, physician. This hip roofed Shingle Style cottage displays such eclectic features as a two-story octagonal turret with leaded glass windows in the second story, first and second story balconies, Gothic windows, a piazza, and a sleeping porch. In contrast to "Up-a-Way's" rectangular form, "Crestwood" exhibits the popular Shingle Style plan of locating the service wing at an angle to the main house. "Crestwood's" spectacular view of Somes Sound on one side and Penobscot Bay on the other

shows that Frost had a gifted eye for siting a cottage.

Frost designed another cottage, "Cairnwood", for Clifford W. Barnes of Lake Forest, Illinois, a noted Chicago area reformer. This cottage, located near "Up-a-Way", was built in 1924. Its first story is constructed of stone, with a stone piazza overlooking the harbor. Like "Crestwood", "Cairnwood" locates the service wing at an angle to the main house. The gambrel-roofed second story is shingled.

Another Frost project in Northeast Harbor was the Jerome H. Knowles House. Originally a Greek Revival cape on Somes Sound, the house was moved to Northeast Harbor in the 1920s and remodeled in the Colonial Revival style from a 1924 design by the architect. Frost's additions to the house included dormers, a fanlighted doorway, and a portico which was designed to have seats like "Up-a-Way".

Frost's final work in Maine was an ambitious plan for Northeast Harbor to relieve traffic congestion and beautify the village. He developed a number of schemes for the downtown in addition to subdividing plots of land for homes in a manner similar to the way his suburban hometown of Lake Forest was planned.<sup>15</sup> Working with Civil Engineer Alfred Mulliken in 1927, Frost projected a park with a fountain for the center of the town, in addition to a new store block, municipal building, and theatre, for which he prepared at least one rendering (Figure 6). Typical of the period, these were to be Colonial Revival in style. The plan was expanded in 1929 but rejected because of its estimated cost of \$160,000.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 5. Dr. Richard C. Cabot Cottage, Northeast Harbor, 1923 drawing (Courtesy of Dale Cowel).

Unusual in its scope for such a small town, the plan, although never executed, is an early example of twentieth century town planning in Maine.

While remaining active as an architect in Chicago, Charles Sumner Frost never failed to board a train late in his life to summer in his native state, where his hobby was painting. On December 11, 1931, Frost died in Lake Forest, where he had designed the town hall, the First Presbyterian Church, the railway station, and the house in which he lived. He was deeply committed to his mid-western community as he was to Northeast Harbor, which is evidenced by the number of cottages he designed in his adopted coastal village and the town plans he developed there. Emanating from a conservative architectural tradition, most of Frost's Maine work reflects the careful restraint which he exercised in adding new buildings to the landscape which he loved.

Thomas C. Jester

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, New York, 1927, Vol. XVII, p. 335; New York, 1937, Vol. XXVI, p. 144.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Chicago Architects Design: A Century of Architectural Drawings from the Art Institute of Chicago*, New York, 1982, p. 76.
- <sup>4</sup> *Portland Directory*, 1883.
- <sup>5</sup> *Interocean Newspaper*, Chicago, February 17, 1883: "Architects Cobb and Frost are building three fine residences at Portland, Maine for Professor Ward, Professor Angell, and J. F. Turner. They each cost about \$12,000 to \$15,000." Deed and directory searches did not yield any information about the Angell or Ward commissions.
- <sup>6</sup> A rendering of the A. E. Frost House appeared in the June, 1887 issue of the *Inland Architect*, Chicago.
- <sup>7</sup> *Lewiston Evening Journal*, May 27, 1886: "Dwellers along Main Street, Lewiston, will be interested in the new residence of A. E. Frost, soon to be built on the corner of Main and Riverside Streets, for the architecture is so unique, and the many details of the house are so novel and commendable. The plans were drawn by the firm of Cobb & Frost of Chicago, the junior member of the firm being Mr. Charles Frost, formerly of this city and son of Mr. A. E. Frost. The house is to be of wood, and in a style of architecture quite new to Lewiston, but familiar in large cities and in suburban towns. It combines many effects, novel and beautiful. The erection of the building will be superintended by G. M. Coombs." In 1891 A. E. Frost built a second house on speculation which he sold to John Crawley. According to the *Lewiston Evening Journal*, June 19, 1891, "plans were prepared in Chicago".

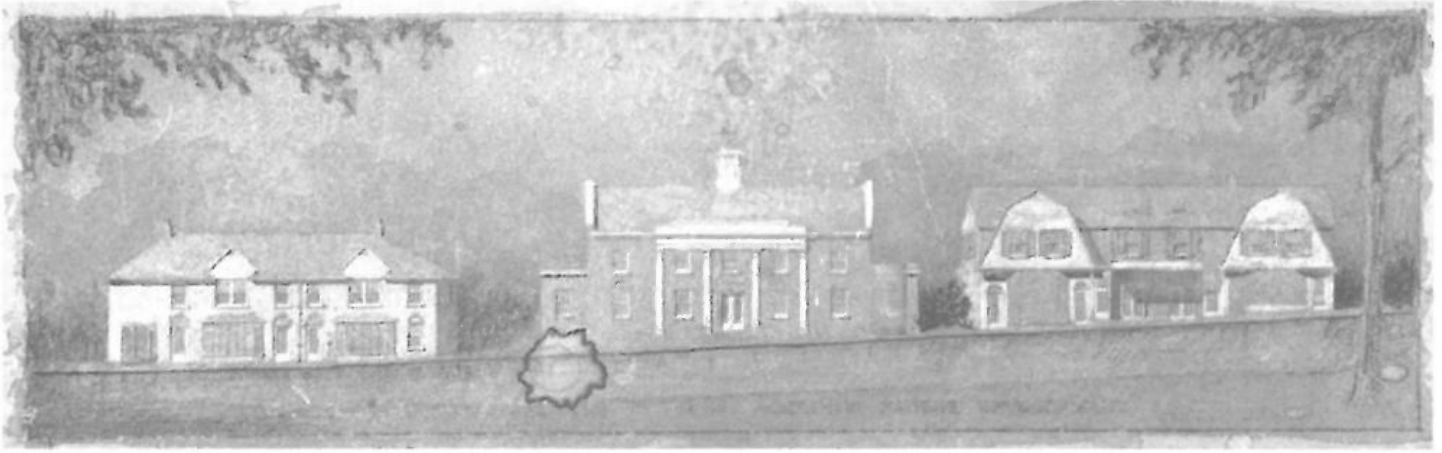


Figure 6. Elevation rendering for Northeast Harbor Redevelopment plan, circa 1928  
(Courtesy of The Great Harbor Museum).

- <sup>8</sup> *Industrial Journal*, Bangor, November 6, 1891. The other architects who competed for this commission were R. P. Walker, Brownfield; W. R. Miller, Lewiston; William E. Barry, Kennebunk; Elmer I. Thomas, Auburn; W. E. Mansur, Bangor.
- <sup>9</sup> National Register nomination for the Maine State Building, files of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.
- <sup>10</sup> *Report of the Board of World's Fair Managers of Maine*, August, 1895, provides a detailed account of the sources of the building materials.
- <sup>11</sup> "Maine at the World's Fair", *New England Magazine*, 1898, p. 297.
- <sup>12</sup> At the end of the Fair, Maine hoped to donate the building to Chicago, but was informed that all buildings had to be removed. The committee then decided that the famed Maine summer resort was the best place for the pavillion. It was dedicated in 1895 as the Library and Art Building at Poland Spring.
- <sup>13</sup> "Country House of Mr. Chauncey Keep, Camden, Me.", *The Architectural Review*, Vol. XI, No. 1, January, 1904, pp. 103-105.
- <sup>14</sup> Frost also designed a cottage on Sutton Island in 1925 for Horatio A. Lamb, a prominent Boston dry goods merchant. Plans for the Lamb Cottage are in the possession of Dale Cowel of Wilmette, Illinois.
- <sup>15</sup> The source of these Frost schemes seems to have been the 1915 design for Market Square in Lake Forest, Illinois, by Howard Van Doren Shaw. A Frost contemporary who also resided in Lake Forest, Shaw developed a forward looking suburban square which addressed automotive traffic and provided a pleasant shopping environment. Several schemes for Frost's Northeast Harbor plan are in the possession of Dale Cowel in Wilmette, Illinois.
- <sup>16</sup> This information comes from a card accompanying the Frost rendering at the Great Harbor Museum, Northeast Harbor.

#### LIST OF KNOWN COMMISSIONS IN MAINE BY CHARLES SUMNER FROST

Professor Angell House, Portland, 1883, Not Located.  
 J. F. Turner House, 27 Falmouth Street, Portland, 1883, Extant.  
 Professor Ward House, Portland, 1883, Not Located.  
 A. E. Frost House, 476 Main Street, Lewiston, 1886, Altered.  
 John H. Crawley House, 193 Holland Street, Lewiston, 1891, Extant.  
 Maine State Building, Poland Spring, 1895, Extant.  
 Chauncy Keep Cottage, Camden, 1900-01, Destroyed.  
 "Up-a-Way", Charles S. Frost Cottage, Peabody Drive, Northeast Harbor, 1921, Extant.  
 "Crestwood", Dr. Richard C. Cabot Cottage, Schoolhouse Ledge, Northeast Harbor, 1923, Extant.  
 "Cairnwood", Clifford W. Barnes Cottage, Peabody Drive, Northeast Harbor, 1924, Extant.  
 "Millbrook", Jerome H. Knowles Cottage, Millbrook Road, Northeast Harbor, 1924, Alterations, Extant.  
 Horatio A. Lamb Cottage, Sutton Island, 1925, Extant.  
 Northeast Harbor Redevelopment Project, Northeast Harbor, 1927-29, Not Executed.

#### ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

A large private collection of Charles Sumner Forst designs in Chicago includes plans and elevations for the Horatio Lamb Cottage and the Richard Cabot Cottage. The Knowles Collection in the Great Harbor Museum, Northeast Harbor, includes drawings for the Jerome Knowles Cottage alterations and the Northeast Harbor Redevelopment Scheme.

Photograph of Charles Sumner Frost  
 Courtesy of The Poland Spring Preservation Society

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